

## Ground Operations (FINAL)

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Version # \_\_\_\_\_

APP # 700466

### 1. Project Description

#### A. Statement of GO Activity

The Desert Tortoise Research Natural Area (DTNA) is 39.5 square miles of prime natural habitat set aside for the desert tortoise, the official California State Reptile. The Mojave population of the desert tortoise (*Gopherus agassizii*) is listed as threatened, both in the state of California and federally. Within the designated boundary of this preserve lies prime habitat that historically supported one of the highest tortoise population densities known. The preserve boasts other flora and fauna representative of the intricate Mojave Desert ecosystem, including the threatened Mohave ground squirrel (*Spermophilus mohavensis*). In 1980, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), U.S. Department of Interior, recognized the significance of the DTNA by designating it an "Area of Critical Environmental Concern" and as a "Research Natural Area". The DTNA lies in the northwestern Mojave Desert on the western edge of the Rand Mountains in eastern Kern County. It is 5.5 miles northeast of California City, a hot spot for OHV recreation.

The majority of the perimeter of the DTNA was fenced in the 1970s with the cooperation of the Desert Tortoise Preserve Committee (DTPC) and the BLM. At the time of installation, fencing was constructed to allow desert tortoises to move freely into and out of the DTNA. The fence was installed to prevent trespass and to maintain the pristine habitat within the DTNA. Now, thirty years later, the recreation pressures at and around the DTNA have increased substantially and the DTPC must alter our management methods in our efforts to protect the threatened desert tortoise to the best of our abilities.

Roads provide access to all regions of the desert and we know that desert tortoises have been killed and injured by vehicles using paved and dirt roads and trails. We do not know, however, how many have been killed or injured by road use because of the vast area of the desert. Fencing is helping protect tortoises in both the Sonoran and Mojave deserts from being killed on many roads. Annual road mortality of desert tortoises has decreased by 75 percent or more since Highway Departments began installing barrier fencing. Kills on dirt roads and trails have been documented at the DTNA and at many other sites in the Mojave and western Sonoran Desert. Vehicle users, especially those driving in dusty areas, may not see tortoises, whether live or dead, when they are driving on dirt roads or trails.

To this end, the DTPC proposes to add desert tortoise exclusion fencing to the existing fence line that is adjacent to highly used roads. The tortoise exclusion fencing will be installed using the specifications developed and suggested by U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Desert Tortoise Recovery Office. The DTPC proposes to install desert tortoise exclusion fencing on approximately three one-mile increments along the southern boundary of Section 26, along the eastern boundary of section 34, and along the southern boundary of 6 at the DTNA.

#### B. Relation of Proposed Project to OHV Recreation

While the proposal to add desert tortoise exclusion fencing to the existing fence on previously specified portions of the Desert Tortoise Research Natural Area (DTNA) does little to add to or enhance OHV recreation the project will function to sustain OHV recreation in and around California City. Please remember that among OHV enthusiasts California City represents one of the last bastions of off-road recreational riding/driving. Many OHV areas in Southern California have been closed, downsized or strictly limited. Consequently, keeping the California City desert open, as a viable riding area is important to OHV recreationists. The installation of desert tortoise exclusion fencing in high OHV traffic areas will prevent accidental deaths of desert tortoises resulting from vehicle impacts. Maintaining high desert tortoise populations within the boundaries of the DTNA will reduce pressure to close existing OHV routes.

Additionally, maintaining populations of special -status species at the DTNA is important to OHV recreationists. Visitation at the DTNA is closely monitored each spring. According to recorded data in 2007 and 2008 approximately half of the visitors arriving at the DTNA's Interpretive Center did so on OHVs (48% in 2007 and 46.4% in 2008). In 2009 visitation by

OHV recreationist increased by 20%, bringing the total number of visitors arriving by OHV to 66.6%, more than half of all individuals visiting the DTNA. Maintaining the populations of special-status species within the DTNA is important to all of our visitors, including OHV riders. The DTNA is an important learning opportunity and recreation location for off-roaders in the area of California City.

**C. Describe the size of the specific Project Area(s) in acres and/or miles**

This project will fund the installation of approximately three linear miles of desert tortoise exclusion fencing at the Desert Tortoise Research Natural Area (DTNA).

**D. Location and description of OHV opportunities**

The area around the Desert Tortoise Research Natural Area (DTNA) supports a large amount of OHV recreation for 12 months of the year. Opportunities are provided for three or more OHV types. In addition to OHV opportunity that has been in place for years, as of March 4, 2008 the City of California City enacted a fee to support Off-Highway Recreation within California City, only five miles from the DTNA. This fee has been used to support and increase OHV recreation in the area. Although the increase in OHV activity does not occur within the boundary of the DTNA there are many direct and indirect impacts to the preserve area, most relevant to this application is the increase of traffic along the southern boundary and eastern boundaries of DTNA.

**2. Rerouting Requirements**

**Rerouting**

(a) Does your project involve rerouting of any roads and trails? ☐ Yes ☒ No

If response to question (a) is 'Yes', a Project timeline, conceptual drawings and site plans are required (See 'Attachments' tab at the top of the screen)

If response to question (a) is 'No', skip details related to rerouting

## Additional Documentation

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1. **Project Timeline (Required if project includes necessary rerouting)**
2. **Conceptual Drawings and Site Plans (Required if project includes necessary rerouting)**  
Attachments: [Desert Tortoise Exclusion Fencing](#)
3. **Project-Specific Maps**  
Attachments: [Desert Tortoise Exclusion Fencing Map](#)
4. **Optional Project-Specific Application Documents**  
Attachments: [Desert Tortoise Exclusion Fencing Photos](#)

## Project Cost Estimate

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<b>APPLICANT NAME :</b>	Desert Tortoise Preserve Committee, Inc.						
<b>PROJECT TITLE :</b>	Ground Operations (FINAL)	<b>PROJECT NUMBER (Division use only) :</b>	G09-04-10-G01				
<b>PROJECT TYPE :</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Acquisition <input type="checkbox"/> Development <input type="checkbox"/> Education & Safety <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ground Operations <input type="checkbox"/> Law Enforcement <input type="checkbox"/> Planning <input type="checkbox"/> Restoration						
<b>PROJECT DESCRIPTION :</b>	<p>The Desert Tortoise Research Natural Area (DTNA) is 39.5 square miles of prime natural habitat set aside for the desert tortoise, the official California State Reptile. The Mojave population of the desert tortoise (<i>Gopherus agassizii</i>) is listed as threatened, both in the state of California and federally. Within the designated boundary of this preserve lies prime habitat that historically supported one of the highest tortoise population densities known. The preserve boasts other flora and fauna representative of the intricate Mojave Desert ecosystem, including the threatened Mohave ground squirrel (<i>Spermophilus mohavensis</i>). In 1980, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), U.S. Department of Interior, recognized the significance of the DTNA by designating it an "Area of Critical Environmental Concern" and as a "Research Natural Area". The DTNA lies in the northwestern Mojave Desert on the western edge of the Rand Mountains in eastern Kern County. It is 5.5 miles northeast of California City, a hot spot for OHV recreation.</p> <p>The majority of the perimeter of the DTNA was fenced in the 1970s with the cooperation of the Desert Tortoise Preserve Committee (DTPC) and the BLM. At the time of installation, fencing was constructed to allow desert tortoises to move freely into and out of the DTNA. The fence was installed to prevent trespass and to maintain the pristine habitat within the DTNA. Now, thirty years later, the recreation pressures at and around the DTNA have increased substantially and the DTPC must alter our management methods in our efforts to protect the threatened desert tortoise to the best of our abilities.</p> <p>Roads provide access to all regions of the desert and we know that desert tortoises have been killed and injured by vehicles using paved and dirt roads and trails. We do not know, however, how many have been killed or injured by road use because of the vast area of the desert. Fencing is helping protect tortoises in both the Sonoran and Mojave deserts from being killed on many roads. Annual road mortality of desert tortoises has decreased by 75 percent or more since Highway Departments began installing barrier fencing. Kills on dirt roads and trails have been documented at the DTNA and at many other sites in the Mojave and western Sonoran Desert. Vehicle users, especially those driving in dusty areas, may not see tortoises, whether live or dead, when they are driving on dirt roads or trails.</p> <p>To this end, the DTPC proposes to add desert tortoise exclusion fencing to the existing fence line that is adjacent to highly used roads. The tortoise exclusion fencing will be installed using the specifications developed and suggested by U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Desert Tortoise Recovery Office. The DTPC proposes to install desert tortoise exclusion fencing on approximately three one-mile increments along the southern boundary of Section 26, along the eastern boundary of section 34, and along the southern boundary of 6 at the DTNA.</p>						
	<b>Line Item</b>	<b>Qty</b>	<b>Rate</b>	<b>UOM</b>	<b>Grant Request</b>	<b>Match</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>DIRECT EXPENSES</b>							
<b>Program Expenses</b>							
1	Staff						

Project Cost Estimate for Grants and Cooperative Agreements Program - 2009/2010  
Agency: Desert Tortoise Preserve Committee, Inc.  
Application: Ground Operations (FINAL)

3/1/2010

	Line Item	Qty	Rate	UOM	Grant Request	Match	Total
	Other-Administration Notes : Office Administration required to organize, hire, plan, pay construction crews, a draft a final report to agency review.	80.000	25.000	HRS	0.00	2,000.00	2,000.00
	Other-Biologist Notes : Biologist to monitor for desert tortoise during fence installation.	12.000	300.000	DAY	0.00	3,600.00	3,600.00
	<b>Total for Staff</b>				0.00	5,600.00	5,600.00
<b>2</b>	<b>Contracts</b>						
	Other-fence installation Notes : A current price quote for the installation of desert tortoise exclusion fencing ( received 2/26/2010) indicated that installing desert tortoise exclusion fencing on existing fence line will cost \$7.40 per linear foot. There are 5280 linear feet per mile there one linear mile of fencing costs \$39,072.	3.000	39072.000	MI	99,216.00	18,000.00	117,216.00
<b>3</b>	<b>Materials / Supplies</b>						
<b>4</b>	<b>Equipment Use Expenses</b>						
<b>5</b>	<b>Equipment Purchases</b>						
<b>6</b>	<b>Others</b>						
<b>7</b>	<b>Indirect Costs</b>						
	Indirect Costs-Unexpected expenditures Notes : This line item is included to cover indirect cost that may develop during the implementation of this grant.	1.000	9921.000	SET	0.00	9,921.00	9,921.00
<b>Total Program Expenses</b>					99,216.00	33,521.00	132,737.00
<b>TOTAL DIRECT EXPENSES</b>					99,216.00	33,521.00	132,737.00
<b>TOTAL EXPENDITURES</b>					<b>99,216.00</b>	<b>33,521.00</b>	<b>132,737.00</b>



Project Cost Summary for Grants and Cooperative Agreements Program - 2009/2010  
Agency: Desert Tortoise Preserve Committee, Inc.  
Application: Ground Operations (FINAL)

3/1/2010

	Line Item	Grant Request	Match	Total	Narrative
<b>DIRECT EXPENSES</b>					
<b>Program Expenses</b>					
1	Staff	0.00	5,600.00	5,600.00	
2	Contracts	99,216.00	18,000.00	117,216.00	
3	Materials / Supplies	0.00	0.00	0.00	
4	Equipment Use Expenses	0.00	0.00	0.00	
5	Equipment Purchases	0.00	0.00	0.00	
6	Others	0.00	0.00	0.00	
7	Indirect Costs	0.00	9,921.00	9,921.00	Indirect costs were calculated at less than 10% of the value of the total project application and will be the responsibility of the Desert Tortoise Preserve Committee.
<b>Total Program Expenses</b>		99,216.00	33,521.00	132,737.00	
<b>TOTAL DIRECT EXPENSES</b>		99,216.00	33,521.00	132,737.00	
<b>TOTAL EXPENDITURES</b>		<b>99,216.00</b>	<b>33,521.00</b>	<b>132,737.00</b>	

## Environmental Review Data Sheet (ERDS)

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### ITEM 1 and ITEM 2

#### ITEM 1

- a. ITEM 1 - Has a CEQA Notice of Determination (NOD) been filed for the Project? ☐ Yes ☒ No  
(Please select Yes or No)

#### ITEM 2

- b. Does the proposed Project include a request for funding for CEQA and/or NEPA document preparation prior to implementing the remaining Project Deliverables (i.e., is it a two-phased Project pursuant to Section 4970.06.1(b)) (Please select Yes or No) ☐ Yes ☒ No

### ITEM 3 - Project under CEQA Guidelines Section 15378

- c. ITEM 3 - Are the proposed activities a "Project" under CEQA Guidelines Section 15378? ☒ Yes ☐ No  
(Please select Yes or No)
- d. The Application is requesting funds solely for personnel and support to enforce OHV laws and ensure public safety. These activities would not cause any physical impacts on the environment and are thus not a "Project" under CEQA. (Please select Yes or No) ☐ Yes ☒ No
- e. Other. Explain why proposed activities would not cause any physical impacts on the environment and are thus not a "Project" under CEQA. DO NOT complete ITEMS 4 – 10

### ITEM 4 - Impact of this Project on Wetlands

No negative cumulative impacts are foreseen as a result of implementing the installation of desert tortoise exclusion fencing project such as increased noise or traffic. All desert tortoise exclusion fencing will be installed on a pre-existing fence line. Disturbance in the project area [i.e. increased noise or traffic] will only occur during the installation of the desert tortoise exclusion fencing. There will be very little disturbance to the natural habitat during the implementation of the project as the three linear installations of desert tortoise exclusion fencing will occur along existing roadways. Vehicles and equipment used to complete the project will be able to access the project area from the existing road ways. Very little damage to the flora of the area is expected due to the existence of roads and fencing in the area.

### ITEM 5 - Cumulative Impacts of this Project

The installation of desert tortoise exclusion fencing will not have any significant cumulative impacts after construction is completed. This project will have no effect on the amount of traffic or noise in the area.

### ITEM 6 - Soil Impacts

This project will not have a significant effect on the environment due to substantial erosion or the loss of topsoil. Soil disturbance will only occur during the installation phase of the project. The displaced soil will be lightly compacted after the installation of the desert tortoise exclusion fencing to prevent immediate loss of soil due to wind erosion.

### ITEM 7 - Damage to Scenic Resources



The Desert Tortoise Preserve Committee's application for funding to install desert tortoise exclusion fencing has no potential for damage to scenic resources within the viewshed of a highway officially designated as a state scenic highway. The work to be funded by this grant would take place entirely within Kern County, California. According to the California Scenic Highway Mapping System [www.dot.ca.gov] there are no designated state scenic highways in Kern County. Additionally the exclusion fencing is slated to be added to an existing fence line. There will be no damage to any scenic resources.

#### ITEM 8 - Hazardous Materials

Is the proposed Project Area located on a site included on any list compiled pursuant to Section 65962.5 of the California Government Code (hazardous materials)? (Please select Yes or No) ☐ Yes ☒ No

If YES, describe the location of the hazard relative to the Project site, the level of hazard and the measures to be taken to minimize or avoid the hazards.

#### ITEM 9 - Potential for Adverse Impacts to Historical or Cultural Resources

Would the proposed Project have potential for any substantial adverse impacts to historical or cultural resources? (Please select Yes or No) ☐ Yes ☒ No

Discuss the potential for the proposed Project to have any substantial adverse impacts to historical or cultural resources.

There are no historical or cultural resources that would be impacted by this project.

#### ITEM 10 - Indirect Significant Impacts

The installation of desert tortoise exclusion fencing proposed by the Desert Tortoise Preserve Committee [DTNA] does not have the potential to cause indirect significant impacts, either to the surrounding environment or to user groups.

The installation of exclusion fencing will not result in user groups going elsewhere due to the fact that off-highway vehicle [OHV] recreation is prohibited within the boundaries of the Desert Tortoise Research Natural Area [DTNA]. OHV recreationists visit the DTNA to experience the beauty of the prime natural habitat. Rather than causing OHV user groups to go elsewhere, the installation of exclusion fencing will protect the inherent values of the DTNA, which are highly valued by visitors to the DTNA who represent the OHV community.

The area around the DTNA already supports a large amount of OHV recreation for 12 months of the year for a variety of OHV types. In addition to OHV opportunity that has been in place for years, a recent route re-opening has increased OHV traffic substantially in the area. In 2002 the Bureau of Land Management closed OHV routes in the Western Rand's. A recent grant written on behalf of the Friends of Jawbone allowed for R 5 and R 50 to be reopened by putting a fence on both sides of the trail. This route has been closed for six years and its re-opening adds 15 miles of trails to the public for access to Munsy Road or travel to Randsburg. Although the route re-opening does not have direct impacts at the DTNA, there are many indirect impacts to the area. The increased public access has resulted in increasing OHV traffic in and around California City. There is also a new California City OHV trail from Borax Bill park and route linkage connecting Jawbone, California City, Camp C and Randsburg via CC10 and CC5 connectors to BLM R5 and R10. Rather than causing significant impacts off-site, the exclusion fencing project proposed by the DTPC works to reduce off-site impacts by protecting desert tortoises from unintentional vehicle collisions. Reducing off-site impacts to wildlife near the DTNA, especially to the threatened desert tortoise and the Mohave ground squirrel, which is a threatened species, will reduce pressure to close existing OHV routes in the area.

This exclusion fencing project does not have potential to significantly increase use in the vicinity of the project site.

#### CEQA/NEPA Attachment

Attachments:

[Documentation of Land Use Conformance and Nepa Adequacy \(DNA\)](#)  
[Draft Environmental Impact Report](#)  
[Executive Summary](#)

## Evaluation Criteria

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### 1. Project Cost Estimate - Q 1. (Auto populates from Cost Estimate)

1. As calculated on the Project Cost Estimate, the percentage of the cost of the Project covered by the Applicant is 0

(Note: This field will auto-populate once the Cost Estimate and Evaluation Criteria are Validated.) (Please select one from list)

- ☐ 76% or more (10 points)  
☐ 51% - 75% (5 points)  
☐ 26% - 50% (3 points)  
☒ 25% (Match minimum) (No points)

### 2. Failure to Complete - Q 2.

2. Failure to complete the Project would result in: 8

(Check all that apply) : Maximum of 8 points (Please select applicable values)

- ☒ Loss of OHV Opportunity (6 points)  
☐ Negative impact to cultural sites (2 points)  
☒ Damage to special-status species or other sensitive habitat (2 points)  
☐ Potential trespass (2 points)  
☐ Additional damage to Facilities (1 point)

Explain each statement that was checked

If special-status species aren't protected and losses of animals occur, there is a potential for a loss of OHV opportunity due to routes being closed. Damage to special-status species: Failure to complete the project would result in damage to special-status species. The purpose of this project is to install desert tortoise exclusion fencing to existing fencing where a nexus occurs between the boundary of the Desert Tortoise Research Natural Area (DTNA) and high traffic routes used by OHV recreationists. Failure to complete the project would result in potential losses of the state and federally threatened desert tortoise and potential losses of Mohave ground squirrel to due vehicle impacts.

### 3. Sustain OHV Opportunity - Q 3.

3. The Project would sustain OHV Opportunity by 1

(Check all that apply) (Please select applicable values)

- ☐ Maintaining trail or road tread (5 points)  
☐ Installing or repairing erosion control features (3 points)  
☐ Providing traffic control and/or educational signage (3 points)  
☒ Maintaining multi use (ATV, Dirt Bikes, 4x4, etc) (1 point)  
☐ Providing varied levels of riding difficulty (1 point)

Explain each statement that was checked

Maintaining multi-use: The project would sustain OHV opportunity by helping to maintain multi-use OHV recreation. The installation of desert tortoise exclusion fencing will help the survival of threatened desert tortoises and Mohave ground squirrels at the Desert Tortoise Research Natural Area (DTNA). Protecting these special-status animals in and around California City, California will help reduce pressure on the currently available OHV routes. Protecting these threatened species within the DTNA will allow routes outside the DTNA to stay open for multi-use recreation purposes. Essentially, maintaining high quality habitat and high tortoise populations in closed areas reduces the pressure to close existing routes and as a result help maintain multiple purpose use within the area.

**4. Public Input - Q 4.**

4. The Project was developed with public input employing the following 2

(Check all that apply) : Maximum of 2 points (Please select applicable values)

- ☒ Publicly noticed meeting(s) with the general public to discuss Project (1 point)
- ☒ Conference call(s) with interested parties (1 point)
- ☒ Meeting(s) with stakeholders (1 point)

Explain each statement that was checked

The Committee hosted our Annual Meeting in Palmdale, California January 2010. Our intention to apply for the OHV grant opportunity was announced as were the types of projects for which we were requesting funds. Attendees were given the opportunity to comment on the projects and give suggestions. Conference calls were held with interested parties and the primary topic of discussion involved targeting high traffic areas around the boundary of the DTNA. The high cost of fencing, makes it very important prioritize projects and identify areas that are at high risk for tortoise-vehicle encounters. The conference calls enabled the Committee to pinpoint areas with high or increasing volume of traffic. The Committee also held a meeting in June 2009 with the BLM to discuss this project and the current status of rewrites to the habitat management plan for the Natural Area.

**5. Utilization of Partnerships - Q 5.**

5. The Project will utilize partnerships to successfully accomplish the Project. The number of partner organizations that will participate in the Project are 4

(Check the one most appropriate) (Please select one from list)

- ☒ 4 or more (4 points)
- ☐ 2 to 3 (2 points)
- ☐ 1 (1 point)
- ☐ None (No points)

List partner organization(s):

The Bureau of Land Management Ridgecrest Field Office, the California Turtle and Tortoise Club, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, San Diego Turtle and Tortoise Society

**6. Impact to Natural and Cultural Resources - Q 6.**

6. The Project will avoid and/or minimize impact to natural and cultural resources by 2

(Check all that apply) : Maximum of 7 points (Please select applicable values)

- ☒ Maintaining physical barriers to control OHV use (1 point)
- ☐ Protecting water quality (1 point)
- ☐ Providing bridges instead of wet crossings where appropriate (1 point)
- ☒ Protecting special-status species (1 point)
- ☐ Re-routing trails to divert away from riparian/wetlands areas (1 point)
- ☐ Providing sanitary facilities (1 point)
- ☐ Protecting cultural site(s) (1 point)
- ☐ Site design precludes the need for the above measures (7 points)

Explain each statement that was checked

Maintaining Barriers to Control OHV Use: The installation of desert tortoise fencing will reinforce the existing fence, which was originally built to prevent unauthorized trespass into the interior of the Desert Tortoise Research Natural Area (DTRNA).

Protecting Special Status Species: The installation of desert tortoise exclusion fencing will function to protect two special status species. The fencing will be installed specifically to protect the state and federally threatened desert tortoise (*Gopherus agassizii*). Once installed the fencing will also function to protect the threatened Mohave ground squirrel (*Spermophilus mohavensis*).

**7. Recycled Materials - Q 7.**

7. The Project incorporates recycled materials by utilizing

(Check all that apply) (Please select applicable values)

- ☐ Barrier materials which include recycled content or materials obtained onsite (1 point)
- ☐ Signs, sign posts or education kiosks which use products with recycled content (1 point)
- ☐ Erosion control features which use materials with recycled content (1 point)
- ☐ Paper used for trail maps which includes recycled content (1 point)
- ☐ Other products with recycled content (Specify) (1 point)

**8. Sustainable Technologies - Q 8.**

8. The Project makes substantial use of sustainable technologies such as 0

- Alternative fuel vehicles and equipment
- Renewable energy sources (e.g., solar, wind)
- Low volatile organic compound emission materials (e.g., paint, sealants, carpet)
- Low flow plumbing fixtures
- Water efficient landscaping

(Check the one most appropriate) (Please select one from list)

- ☒ No (No points) ☐ Yes (4 points)

Explain 'Yes' response

**9. Motorized Access - Q 9.**

9. The Project improves and/or maintains facilities that provide motorized access to the following non-motorized recreation opportunities 6

(Check all that apply) Scoring: 2 points each, up to a maximum of 6 points (Please select applicable values)

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Camping  | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Birding |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Hiking                                      | <input type="checkbox"/> Equestrian trails  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fishing  | <input type="checkbox"/> Rock Climbing      |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) [Wildflower identification] |   |